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and we trust that thereby the question of any disturbance of this agreement, which has now been in force nearly 79 years, may have been forever settled.

#### COMMERCE DESTROYERS.

In a strong article on "Jingoes and Silverites" in the November *North American Review* Mr. Edward Atkinson, one of the clearest-headed and best-informed thinkers in this country, gives expression to sentiments touching our relations to England which there ought to be no occasion for uttering this late in the nineteenth century. But, unfortunately, there never have been more than two or three periods in our history when such sentiments needed utterance worse than they do now.

At first thought, it is a little puzzling to understand why jingoes and silverites should be classed together, for there are evidently many silverites who are not jingoes at all and *vice versa*. But on dipping into Mr. Atkinson's sentences one soon discovers that he is dealing only with that extreme class of free-coinage silver men, certain attorneys of the mine-owners and certain madly partisan anything-to-beat-England legislators, who would be willing, some of them glad, to carry their free-silver proclivities to the extent of involving our country in a disastrous war with Great Britain simply to improve, as they think, their business prosperity. Silverites of this type are certainly a great bane to the country, as ites of any other kind are who carry their views and wishes to such a madly selfish extreme. But Mr. Atkinson we know would grant as readily as any one that many silverites, bimetalists and free-coinage men both, are as far from wishing a rupture with Great Britain as any of us.

Turning to the jingo folks, the whole class falls, and we think with entire justice, under Mr. Atkinson's vigorous and well-aimed blows. There is no good whatever in jingoism. It is evil, and only evil and that continually, no matter by whom held. "The jingo element," he says, "can only become dangerous through the negligence of the mass of thinking men. That men are negligent is witnessed by the fact that those who would promote war with Great Britain do not immediately become disgraced as they might rightly be."

Speaking of the money which has lately been expended at the public cost in the construction of a new navy, Mr. Atkinson says that in the present state of the world, "we required armed cruisers which could be speedily sent to dangerous points for the protection of our citizens in foreign lands and for the protection of our commerce. We may have been justified in constructing one or two so-called battle-ships without waiting for their worthlessness to be disclosed; but we can not be justified in having constructed two very costly vessels of war which are known in the navy and generally among the people as 'commerce destroyers.' That name is a disgrace to the ship, to officers of the navy and to the nation. These

two ships of war cost about seven million dollars, or a little more. That sum is nearly as great as the endowment of our oldest university, Harvard. The time was when it was considered justifiable for an army to sack a city and for the officers and soldiers of an army to enrich themselves from the plunder of the private houses and other property of a conquered country. That time has long since passed. The sacking of cities is a disgrace. Private plunder is treated as robbery. An officer joining therein ceases to be a gentleman, and is regarded as a thief. Yet what would disgrace an army and its officers upon the land may be imposed upon the navy and its officers as a duty. It is now held to be among their lawful functions to do the work of pirates in ships of war built at the public cost, bearing the degrading name of 'commerce destroyers.' The nation was even represented at the recent opening of the peaceful canal at Kiel by one of these vilely named armed vessels. What could have been more grotesque than the display of war vessels at the opening of the ship-canal at Kiel \* \* sent thither from various states and nations, at a very heavy cost, to celebrate the opening of a canal whose purpose is to carry cotton, fibres and metals to the people of Germany. \* \* The cost of the canal was about forty million dollars. The waste upon these big and mainly worthless war-ships must have represented an expenditure of not less than two hundred million dollars."

Mr. Atkinson might well have gone a step further in his opposition to war vessels. In case of naval war between this and any other country, would it make the slightest difference whether these two ships were called "commerce destroyers" or not? In spite of all efforts to the contrary, it will be a long time yet before war becomes sufficiently "civilized" to respect the private property of national enemies at sea, or on land either, especially if the contest be a close one. It is true that the sacking of cities is now a disgrace, because the sacking of a city implies wanton violence after victory is won. But the destruction of private property is considered perfectly legitimate, and always will be when necessary to break the power of the enemy and secure victory. The most brilliant and lauded of all the campaigns of our Civil War, which on the part of the North is usually considered to have been carried on on "Christian" and "civilized" principles, was little else than a destruction of private property on a huge scale from beginning to end. Three hundred millions of Southern private property went to smoke, or to ruin in other ways, at the hands of Sherman's destructive hosts, and this was considered perfectly legitimate because necessary in order speedily to break the backbone of the Southern resistance. Our war-ships, no matter how named, would, in the case of a closely-contested war with any nation, treat the enemy's private commerce at sea just as Sherman's army treated the property of the people of the South. They would

almost certainly be ordered by the government itself to do so. "This is war," and in order not to have "commerce destroyers" the whole bloody and inhuman business must be abandoned and no more war-ships built under any name. "Commerce destroyers," battle-ships, swift cruisers, torpedo boats and the whole tribe of fire-blowing marine monsters create more "dangerous points" than they remove. Every time we add a new vessel to our "new navy" we add two or three new "dangerous points."

The suggestion of Mr. Atkinson, that the English-speaking people enter into a commercial treaty exempting private property from seizure upon the sea, "that the destruction of private property at sea by the war-vessels of any nation should be held as piracy," if it could be carried out, would almost certainly serve as a powerful means of preventing war, but in the storm and stress of actual war, once declared, such a compact would go to pieces with the first cannon-blast.

Mr. Atkinson's comparison between the strained armed relations of the European nations, eying each other hatefully over the "barriers to mutual service at the borders of separation," and our own peaceful unarmed relations to Canada is an intensely interesting exposition of one of the most instructive bits of international relationship. "There is no antagonism between us, and throughout the long civil war not a ship was needed to watch the harbors of Canada lest an attack should be made from them upon us, and not a regiment was called for to guard our long northern frontier. On that frontier there also exists a canal, far greater in its service than the canal at Kiel can ever be. The tonnage which passes yearly through the St. Mary's Canal, which unites our great lakes, exceeds that of the Suez Canal. Yet not a fort is required to guard that canal, and not a ship of war is permitted upon either of the great lakes. The true Monroe doctrine, so different from that which the Jingo element among our politicians so grossly misrepresents, has been applied to these lakes since 1818. \* \* Yet it is even now considered reputable for the United States to construct 'commerce destroyers' to exercise their piratical functions under the flag of the Union upon the open seas!"

Mr. Atkinson then points out the effect which a war with Great Britain would have on our commerce and appeals to the "moral and economic force of the community," "the great body of thinking people," to "stamp out of political existence" the "noisy, unprincipled and aggressive" jingoism which takes "advantage of every petty prejudice to excite animosity and to betray the peace of the country."

#### COAST DEFENCES AGAIN.

Major-General Miles has just made public his annual report as commander of the United States army. He

signalizes his promotion to his present position by recommending that the regular army be increased and that immediate attention should be given to the improvement of our coast defences. The army, he thinks, should be increased with the growth of the country, its minimum size being one soldier to every 2000 of the population, and its maximum one to every 1000. This would give us at the present time a maximum army of 70,000. But it is our coast defences about which he is most concerned. In their present condition, any strong naval power, he supposes, could blockade our whole Pacific coast in 90 days. With all our inventive genius and enterprise, we are as far behind in the modern appliances of war as China or Japan!! The entire gulf coast and all the great cities of the Atlantic seaboard northward to Philadelphia and from New York on northward are without modern guns. The recent manœuvres on the British coast show that even the powerful British navy would be unable to defend that coast against a foreign fleet. He argues, therefore, that for protection we ought to have a vast chain of coast batteries fitted up with all the high-power guns. This "*costly undertaking*," he suggests, might be met *in part* by the sale of abandoned military reservations.

We doubt if General Miles has allowed his mental vision to compass the enormousness of the outlay which would be required adequately to fortify our immense coast-line against the supposed attacks of a hostile fleet. All the money that could be obtained from the abandoned military reservations would be consumed before the foundations of such works were half completed; and we seriously question whether the expenditure of the whole income of the government for years to come in this one way only would allay the fears of our professional military men, if, that is, we should actually undertake the impossible task of rendering impregnable all the important points on our seaboard from Maine down the Atlantic, around the Gulf and up the Pacific coast to the Island of Vancouver. If we are to go into this business in accordance with the real meaning of the recommendations of General Miles and General Flagler, the citizens of the country ought to be clearly apprised of the exhausting burdens which it will ultimately lay upon them and of the utter uselessness of the whole project. It is stupendous folly to suppose that such an undertaking could ever be brought to successful completion. The most that can be done, or will ever be done by the government, in response to the demands of the military professionalists, will be the fortification of a few important points. When this is done at great cost, as it doubtless will be done, unless the people move quickly against it, we shall find our coast as a whole just as defenceless against foreign war fleets ten or twenty years from now as it is to-day, or as the coast of Great Britain is defenceless before a hostile fleet in spite of her powerful navy built up at a cost of from two to four hundred millions of dollars. But the